

**Linda Clair**  
**Seven-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre, Australia**  
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**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 5b – Wednesday afternoon discussion session**

Question: When I'm meditating, my chin and my bottom lip sometimes start shaking. It does it occasionally at home in which case I try to stop it. But here when I'm meditating should I just let it happen.

Linda: Yes, I've noticed that. That's been happening for a little while. Does it do it when you're not meditating? (Yes.) I don't know what it is. Just let it go. It's not a big thing. It's just a little movement. I noticed it last time. It's not a big deal. It doesn't do it all the time. And you can feel it?

Question: Yes, I know it's happening. My hands shake too. It's all part of the aging business. (Laughing) And I think I finally mastered the breathing. It only took ten years to get it right. 😊

Linda: So you got it together now? (Yes.) That's good. When you're walking do the breathing as well. Feel your feet but breathe, be aware of your breath, as well.

Question: I want to ask about breathing as well. The last two days I've really tried to work with breathing and being aware. If I'm walking I can be really aware of my body and my breath, but I've also become aware of the running commentary. It's very quiet but it's there. I don't know whether to start counting when I'm walking out and about – not the slow walk – or whether to deepen my breathing and choose to be in that. That overlay seems, not constant, but so strong, this tiny...

Linda: And as you become clearer you become more aware of that. When you become stiller you feel the slightest ripple of thought. I'd say count your steps when you're walking. I still do that sometimes. It must be just a leftover thing, but I walk and quite enjoy counting. I used to do it quite a bit, I'd count my steps.

Question: When I'm sitting it's the same. I spend periods counting and periods without. But the periods without, it's a very odd sensation. It's as if the thought is suddenly there and I can feel it here inside my head on this side. I don't feel anything on the other side. It's very subtle and it's suddenly there and I'm not fast enough to catch them usually – occasionally I see as they arise.

Linda: Occasionally is good enough, that's good. So do that, alternate – sometimes count, sometimes don't. And don't be put off by seeing it as the thinking becoming stronger when you're not counting. But do your best to catch it, and then go into counting again.

Question: When I'm breathing and not doing the counting and the thinking starts, it's as if it competes with the choice of breathing or thinking. It feels as if I have to focus on the breathing to go away from the thinking when the thinking comes in. I know that I could start counting but sometimes I want to be able to just breathe and not count.

Linda: Well, do that and just do your best. It takes such a huge effort at times to pry yourself away from what you're thinking about – "I've got to think about this right now!" It might come in, and

then you come back, and then it will come back. It's incredibly tiring to do that. If it eventually takes over don't beat yourself up about it, but put up a good, not fight, but be persistent with it.

Question: I think I've never been so persistent as I have been today. (Good.) And today the pressure in my skull was so huge this morning. I felt like I was fat inside my head. It was very strong, and dissipated by lunch time.

Linda: It will happen at times though. So be careful you don't see anything like that as a bad thing, or any sort of resistance as a bad thing. But that is a good thing.

Question: It wasn't till M. said something about the pressure and you answered her – then I didn't feel it was bad. It was good to hear.

Linda: It's not bad but there's this deep inbuilt, "Pain, pressure, tension in the body is bad." In this case, or any case, it's not, it's just how it is. Like I said, a lot happens in your head, in your brain. It might become stronger – probably will at times – but a lot is happening, especially when it's there. So just breathe – not to get away from it or lessen the intensity – just to be able to sit with it. I found it one of the hardest places to really, really feel it. It was almost unbearable at times, but not unbearable. And the more you think about it the more unbearable it will become. But just go for one more moment, breathe. Just do whatever you can to put up with it till the bell goes. And that is success, not how you've dealt with it, it's, "Ah, I got to the bell!"

Question: I've also had some episodes recently where I actually couldn't stay. When we were in Aldinga I had two times where the sensation in my body was so unknown and inward – not pain but I couldn't take it. I actually had to move twice. It happened the other day but it was less and I stayed through it. So I'm beginning to know about sensations that I don't recognise, they're very odd. The one that made me leave the seat was like when you have pins and needles and it stops. The almost-unbearable flood of blood back to the limb creates an inner torture, a funny tickly – it's not pain but a very strong sensation inside my body, all over, as if everything is moving very fast but no movement at all. It got stronger and stronger until I felt I was going to implode, I guess. I really couldn't stay. Those are the only two times I've ever left my seat for anything. It quite frightened me to be in such sensation that I couldn't bear it. This time, the pressure was more in my head today.

Linda: Yes, this is a preparation to be able bear it completely in your body. It's not like it's going to feel like that all the time but this is the preparation for that, because it's not how you think it's going to be. You think it's going to be all ecstasy and pleasure. At times it's like that but that's nothing compared to how it is and compared to the intensity of it. So I think what you were feeling was just this incredible intensity that you've never felt before, maybe, and that's hard to bear. But then when you go back to normality that is actually harder to bear because you go, "No, I can't stand this! This is so dull."

Question: It's one of the things of the retreats so far for me is the unbearableness of being in this very heavy state. I have no concept of being out of this state but something every now and again knows what it's like not to be in this heavy, constricted, contracted... And I don't think of how I am as bad but it's unbearable sometimes.

Linda: And that's what spurs you on. I always liked that movie title, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. It's true, it's almost unbearable. And that's why you need to be grounded as well. It's not a heavy state. It feels heavy at times leading up to it, and I'd say everyone feels that. Today I felt it quite strongly. A lot of people have felt quite heavy and weighed down by it. But what it's leading

to is this incredible, incredible lightness and space – indescribable! But it's intense. So you have to get ready for it. Otherwise you'll take off into space and never be seen again. 😊

Question: You said that about space – I had a sit where I felt I was expanding, and spacious and a kind of deepness, and spread out so my boundaries disappeared. It might be related to the difficult start I had to the retreat. I was really emotional and crying a lot. It felt like grief or deep sadness which has stayed and stayed. I managed to count through every sit, and then I'd go to my room and lie down and cry. Then I'd come back and count and count. For the first time ever I thought that if I had a car I'd leave. It was gruesome and kept on going. Then it disappeared and this feeling of lightness and peace started to happen and I was so grateful for it.

Linda: When did it go?

Question: I think it was yesterday, lunch time or maybe the day before. I went back to bed after the sit and got under the covers and felt really miserable and cried. It was great if I could cry. The next time I cried it out and I started to feel, "Ah, I think it's over."

Linda: I'm glad you didn't leave. I'm glad you didn't have a car. (Laughing) I've had things like that – really emotional periods not seemingly related to anything, just feeling miserable. And then it just suddenly lifts. It's often before some deep realisation, whatever it is doesn't matter, but just a lifting. It's good that you persevered. Is that why you're sitting on a chair?

Question: Partly, yes. It was exhausting and I needed a break every so often.

Linda: Well, that's good to hear. And you've been sitting for long. I see your shoes in here first thing in the morning, the first pair. (Laughing) R. is the first.

Question: I like that first silence and the darkness of the first sit. I can really be here whereas later I'm much more all over the place with more thinking.

Linda: What time do you get in here R.?

Question: After the first couple days of settling in, that I found pretty hard, I got this – all over from my toes, everyone – "What if this was the last retreat I came to?" It was cold so I couldn't walk, which I normally do. I felt like an egg without the shell, just the membrane. And couldn't shake off this feeling, even though it's got nothing to do with reality. I'll be at the next one – there's nothing else to do but love the technique.

I've been grappling today with that desire to think. When I'm here in each sit and I'm breathing and counting – I count steps even when I'm home – the desire to think is magnetic, even though the thoughts are so boring. I've used the elements a lot this retreat to really anchor me too. I've never seen leaves move the way they have in the wind. I think it's sort of a precious feeling to feel like this is the last retreat. It's not but...

Linda: Well, you never know! You can never say that. That has to be the attitude you take, "This could be the last one so I'll put everything into this," because you don't know.

Question: I feel a lot of my judgments have dropped away in some way, I don't know how. They'll be tested when I get home I suppose.

Question: I haven't had any pressing question come up...

Linda: I'm just interested to know what's been happening. You've been sitting almost continuously. I don't think I've seen you do the walking once. So how are you feeling?

Question: Good. I feel more intrigued with the whole thing. I don't really plan to keep sitting. Usually, after the three hours I say, "Okay, that's the last one you're doing," and then I just feel to do it the next time again. It's just been an interesting relationship with the pain in particular. I don't feel I'm as attached to it. It is changing a lot. It's bearable.

Linda: What's intriguing you? I felt that watching you, there was a different quality about you. It felt like you wanted to see what's going to happen next. Peter used to say that to me sometimes, "You wonder what's going to happen next." That's why I kept sitting, "What if I sit longer?"

Question: And this is what I was waiting for. So why stand up? Sometimes I'm experiencing freedom I suppose, less of my mind. I don't know how to describe it.

Linda: Well, the freedom is your behaviour not being ruled by fear. So keeping on sitting when it's painful – at the right time, since it's not necessarily better to do that every time. It's like you're going, "What are my limits?" Then you keep raising that limit and go, "I'll just go a bit farther," until, in the end, you see the limits were just because of your fear and they weren't real. There are really no limits. All you were limited by was your fear. And this is a way of doing that.

Question: I do feel a lot of fear.

Linda: That's even more significant, that you feel that fear and keep sitting because you're facing every bit of fear that's always been there, that you've been avoiding for most of your life.

Question: It feels like there's a lot there too.

Linda: In a way yes, in a way it's the fear. What you see at the end is that the fear is just a thought, it was not real. That's when you go, "Oh my god, I always thought that this fear was real and it's not." But when it's happening it feels very real – it's so strong that it feels real. So sitting there feeling it is facing it. And every time you do that there's a bit less there. At the end of this retreat there'll be quite a bit less. So don't look at what's there; be aware of what's not there too, that there is less. It's not endless, the fear I mean.

Question: When you were practicing did you feel a lot of it? It becomes more palpable at the same time as things are falling away. So sometimes it feels more intense than it was. Working has stirred up a lot of different parts of me that I didn't realise were still there. But I see them much more clearly. It's a bit shocking. But in your practice did you notice a lot of that falling away as you progressed? Or was it more that you were able to bear it?

Linda: It was more that I was able to bear it. I wasn't so aware that it was falling away. All I could see, which is a bit similar to what you were saying, is what was still there, and a determination to be free from it. So I felt it in different ways. A lot of people talk about terror and that sort of thing. I never felt that until right near realisation. As it was happening I felt incredible fear then, and I was shaking with it. But before that I'd get very emotional times, a bit like M. was describing. I'd get very emotional at times and didn't know what it was.

When I was sitting there was a lot of pain for quite a while. You could say that the pain is related to fear but I didn't feel a lot of fear about it. I could actually feel the pain was burning away something.

I didn't know what it was. I just felt I had to see more what it was. And the more I could sit through, the stronger I became and the more determined I became. But at times after a really intense sit I'd feel quite shocked like I'd just have to go and lie down. It wasn't all pain but there was quite a bit in my experience. A lot of people in their spiritual journey, if you want to call it that, don't actually get to the point where they can sit with pain, whether it's emotional or physical – it's all the same really. Being in England with less-experienced people – not all of them were less experienced – it made me realise how mature the people who come here are, really mature.

So yes, keep going. Keep intrigued. It becomes more and more intriguing and it never stops being intriguing. It just becomes more and more intriguing. The less there is, the more intriguing it becomes. So you never really get to this end point. The suffering – yes that goes, and you forget what it's like. You can't remember. There's no body memory of what it's like to sit here in intense pain. That just goes.

Question: About two sits ago I would have told you the pain isn't real because every time there was pain I would focus on it and it would dissipate, so it was just a different type of energy. Then in my last sit I reached a point that, at the pressure points kneeling down, incredible pain appeared that was almost unbearable. So I was wondering if I was deceiving myself in the other sits. The pain was still there after the session so I was not sure if it was a different pain or I'm just getting it wrong.

Linda: No, it's true that pain is really just concentrated energy. What you felt was real, that the pain is not real. But never assume that it's gone. You'll know when it's gone, there won't be any question about it. But leading up to it, you want it to be gone. You have a series of realisations where you'll feel that – particularly in a situation like this – but you need to do that, that will happen quite a bit. So keep doing that. You weren't deluded at all; it was a really deep realisation.

Question: It's as if a burden has been taken off, if you know what I mean. I was carrying something and now it's gone.

Linda: Good. That's what this is all about, the burden of being this person being lifted. The pain, it will come back, but you'll feel more able to deal with it now. And you'll see the reason for it being there too. You'll feel the reason that it's there. And you know that it's not real, although at times of course it will feel real. Eventually, when your consciousness quickens to such a degree that the pain doesn't affect you, you see that the pain is actually vibrating at a much lower speed. Then it dissipates like it did when you saw it.

Question: I kind of know that it's not real but it became real again or it reacted differently from what I expected it to do.

Linda: Yes, you have to keep going. It was a realisation but it's not the full thing. The realisation is there in you. It's not that that will go away. But it doesn't mean that you're at the point where all the pain will go away – that takes longer. But it is a big thing to see that it isn't real, it isn't this fixed thing. And to feel that in your own body – not someone else telling you or reading it in a book – is so different to just believing what someone said or trusting what someone says, because you won't trust this until you actually realise it yourself. Nothing that I say will be the same as you doing it in your body. And that's why we're in our bodies – to realise that, to realise why we're here. That's what our bodies are for. To live in your body in the world free from fear – it's not really the pain, it's fear of the pain – is an amazing thing. Then everything changes.

Question: Sometimes I notice my mind is almost like a rope that I would like to cut but I don't know what tool to use.

Linda: This, what you're doing, is the tool. And your pure intelligence is the tool. Your body is the tool. To cut it all at once is tempting because sometimes you feel, "Ah, there's all this fear. If I could just let go now it would be okay." But it's too much to cut it all at once. It needs to be a gradual thing until you get to the point where it gives and lets go – and that's it. But you need to prepare yourself for that otherwise it's too much for the body, psyche.

Freedom is too much to feel too soon. It's all to do with the timing. It's too much of a shock to be free. It's much, much better to prepare yourself for it. And that's what this is all about.